

## PRACTICE INSTRUCTIONS

As explained above, due to its two elements of the *aspiration to benefit others* and the *enlightenment aspiration*, Bodhicitta aspires to attain enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings. Thus, for a Bodhisattva who has newly generated Bodhicitta and therefore just entered the Mahayana path, the question that arises is *how* to attain enlightenment.

The answer is: the only way to attain enlightenment is to engage in extensive and prolonged practice of the Mahayana stages to full enlightenment, which must be preceded by listening, contemplating, and meditating on Mahayana *practice instructions*. Therefore, the second topic of the first chapter comprises the *practice instructions*.

[The topic of *practice instructions* itself is relatively short, and we spent only one or two classes in the spring of 2011 expounding on its definition, causes, categories, and so forth.]

However, the *Ornament* explains ten different Mahayana practice instructions. Coming after the explanation of Bodhicitta, these ten instructions assist Bodhisattvas who have newly attained the path of accumulation (or who aspire to become Bodhisattvas and thus to enter the Mahayana path of accumulation) to generate the qualities they have not yet generated and to retain the qualities they have generated.

The ten practice instructions expound on ten topics. These ten topics are:

1. The two truths
2. The four noble truths
3. The three objects of refuge
4. Diligence/enthusiastic effort/perseverance of non-involvement
5. Diligence/enthusiastic effort/perseverance of tirelessness
6. Diligence/enthusiastic effort/perseverance of thoroughly applying oneself to the path of practice
7. The Five Sublime Eyes
8. The Six Clairvoyances
9. The Path of Seeing
10. The path of Meditation

The *Ornament* describes the ten topics of the ten Mahayana practice instructions in two verses (verses 22 and 23):

*Practice, the truths,  
The three jewels such as the Buddha,  
Non-involvement, tirelessness,  
Thoroughly upholding the path, [22]*  
*The five sublime eyes, clairvoyance's  
Six qualities and what are called "the paths of seeing  
And meditation": these practice instructions  
Should be known as having a tenfold character. [23]*

The meaning of those verses is:

Bodhisattvas on the path of accumulation should now listen, contemplate, and meditate on the Mahayana practice instructions. This will enhance their practice and their progress on the path to enlightenment.

**These practice instructions should be known as having a tenfold character** since they describe the following ten topics:

1. The two truths: the two truths are explained in order to understand the nature and the aspect of **practice**
2. The four noble truths: **the** four noble **truths** are the focal object of practice
3. The three objects of refuge: going for refuge to **the three jewels such as the Buddha** and so forth serves as the basis of one's practice
4. The diligence of non-involvement: the diligence of **non-involvement** counteracts the laziness of engaging in non-virtuous actions and assists practitioners in stabilizing their practice.

5. The diligence of tirelessness: the diligence of **tirelessness** counteracts the laziness of sloth/procrastination and assists practitioners in increasing their practice
6. The diligence of thoroughly upholding the path of practice: the diligence of **thoroughly upholding the path** of practice counteracts the laziness of self-contempt/faintheartedness and assists practitioners in averting the deterioration of their practice
7. The five sublime eyes: **the five sublime eyes** are special powers that practitioners need in order to become more self-sufficient
8. The six types of clairvoyance: **clairvoyance's six qualities**, i.e. the six types of clairvoyance, are needed in order to quickly complete the accumulation of merit
9. The path of seeing: practitioners on the **path of seeing** have newly cultivated the meditative absorption directly realizing emptiness. The principal function of this meditative absorption is to permanently eliminate the *intellectually acquired* ignorance etc.
10. The path of meditation: practitioners on the **path of meditation** have achieved the cessation of the intellectually acquired ignorance etc. and their meditative absorption directly realizing emptiness now eliminates the *innate* ignorance etc.

[Of the ten topics taught in the ten practice instructions, the first, the **two truths**, was discussed extensively during the IBD philosophy course in the spring of 2011, the **four noble truths** in the autumn of 2011, the **three objects of refuge** in the spring of 2012, and the **three diligences** (the fourth, fifth, and sixth topics of the ten *practice instructions*), the **five sublime eyes**, and **six clairvoyances** in the autumn of 2012]

Next follows a presentation of the ninth and tenth topics of the Mahayana practice instructions, the Mahayana **path of seeing** and the Mahayana **path of meditation**. They are explained under the following outline:

*Instructions on eradicating the seeds of the objects of elimination*

However, before providing expositions on these two paths according to the commentaries of the *Ornament*, a presentation of paths in general, of afflictive and cognitive obstructions, and of each of the five paths is given.

## **Paths**

One very important concept of Buddhist philosophy is the concept of the five paths. Here 'paths' do not actually refer to physical pathways but to non-physical states of mind that are cultivated by listening, contemplating, and meditating on the Dharma. Paths have a goal-oriented nature, for they are different levels of mental attainments that gradually take practitioners to the two principal Buddhist goals:

- (1) Liberation
- (2) Enlightenment/Buddhahood (which includes the attainment of liberation)

To achieve these goals, practitioners cultivate different paths in their mental continua by which they gradually eliminate the two types of obstructions that keep them from attaining the two goals.

The two types of obstructions are:

- (1) Afflictive obstructions (obstructions to liberation)
- (2) Cognitive obstructions (obstructions to omniscience. i.e. Buddhahood).

Since Buddhist goals are twofold, there are also two types of Buddhist practitioners:

- (1) Practitioners who *merely* seek liberation: Hinayana/Fundamental Vehicle practitioners
- (2) Practitioners who seek enlightenment: Mahayana/Universal Vehicle practitioners

In order to assist the two types of practitioner the Buddha taught two categories of practice:

- (1) The Hinayana/Fundamental Vehicle
- (2) The Mahayana/Universal Vehicle

Therefore there are also two categories of paths:

- (1) The Hinayana/Fundamental Vehicle paths and
- (2) The Mahayana/Universal Vehicle paths.